

smite

community magazine



ATLANTA, GA
JANUARY 9TH - 11TH
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INSIDE: INTERVIEW WITH HIREZSTEW, A HISTORY OF ESPORTS IN SMITE

GameOnMag.com

MEN FIGHT. GODS SMITE.



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From The Editor

Back in April 2014, the SMITE Community Magazine released its first issue to the public. We were very nervous about how this passion project would do but, much to our delight, the community loved it and couldn't wait for the next issue. Nine months later and here we are at the SMITE World Championships, sponsored by Curse Voice! Oh how time flies.

If you're anything like myself, you may not be the most professional of players. Don't get me wrong, I can hold my own in SMITE, but when it comes to the eSports scene, I'm a little lost. Because of this, we tasked our team this month to create a special edition to not only celebrate eSports within the game we all love, but also to help those who don't have the greatest understanding of the scene feel a little bit more at home whilst enjoying the SWC.

We go through the history of the scene, why LANs are the place to be, why picks and bans are very important and so much more! We've even got an interview with the man himself, Stew, President of Hi-Rez Studios! So, get yourself comfy and enjoy the rest of the event!

Kris West
Editor



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Special thanks to everybody at HiRez Studios who has been so supportive over the past nine months. Not only did they help us grow as a project, but they've continued to support our development through-out.



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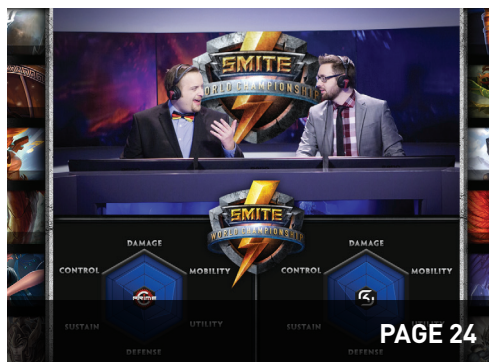


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GameOn

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BONUS SMITE ESPORTS CONTENT



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SEATING PLAN



MAIN LOBBY

FOOD TRUCKS

HALL OF THE GODS



MAP LEGEND

- STANDARD REGISTRATION
- GOLDEN REGISTRATION
- VIP & LEGENDARY REGISTRATION
- COSPLAY AREA
- STANDARD & GOLDEN SWAG PICK UP

SEATING GUIDE

- LEGENDARY
- GOD
- VIP & GOLDEN
- STANDARD

SMITE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP BRACKET



SMITE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SCHEDULE

Times are estimated and may change based on match lengths and other factors.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 9

10:00 AM	Doors Open for Registration
11:00 AM	Pre-Show & Hall of the Gods Experience Opens
11:30 AM	Match 1: COG Red vs. DID (Bo1)
12:45 PM	Match 2: SK Gaming vs. We Love Bacon (Bo1)
02:00 PM	Match 3: Titan vs. OMG (Bo1)
02:45 PM	SMITE Xbox One Reveal
03:15 PM	Match 4: COG Prime vs. Name not Found (Bo1)
04:00 PM	Season 2 Reveal
04:45 PM	Match 5: Loser of (1) vs. Loser of (2) (Bo1)
05:45 PM	Match 6: Loser of (3) vs. Loser of (4) (Bo1)
07:00 PM	Match 7: Winner of (1) vs. Winner of (1) (Bo1)
08:15 PM	Match 8: Winner of (3) vs. Winner of (4) (Bo1)
09:00 PM	Wrap Up

SATURDAY, JANUARY 10

08:30 AM	Doors Open for Registration
09:00 AM	Hall of the Gods Experience Opens
10:00 AM	Quarter-Final 1 Preview
10:45 AM	Quarter-final 1: Winner of (5) vs. Loser of (8) (Bo3)
01:30 PM	Quarter-Final 2 Preview
02:00 PM	Quarter-final 2: Winner of (6) vs. Loser of (7) (Bo3)
05:00 PM	Semi-Final 1 Preview
05:30 PM	Semi-Final 1: Winner of (7) vs. Winner of Q-F1 (Bo3)
08:30 PM	Semi-final 2 Preview
09:00 PM	Semi-Final 2: Winner of (8) vs. Winner of Q-F2 (Bo3)
12:00 AM	Wrap Up

SUNDAY, JANUARY 11

08:30 AM	Doors Open for Registration
09:00 AM	Hall of the Gods Experience Opens
10:00 AM	Consolation Match Preview
10:30 AM	Consolation Match Loser of S-F1 vs. Loser of S-F2 (Bo3)
01:30 PM	Cosplay Finals and Awards
02:00 PM	Grand Finals Preview
02:30 PM	Grand Finals Winner of S-F1 vs. Winner of S-F2 (Bo5)
07:45 PM	Award Ceremony Trophies and Wrap up
09:00 PM	After Party Presented by Curse Voice

Please note: it is possible that the brackets and schedule may have changed since print. Please be sure to check our the latest: swc.smitegame.com



TITAN

Name: Titan *(formally known as Aquilla)*

In-Game Tag: [Titan]

Region: European

Roster: Confrey (Solo), Repikas (Jungle),
From Left to Right Ataraxia (Hunter), PrettyPriMe
(Mid), KayneLife (Support)

Combined SMITE Career: 10 Years, 2 Months

Total Player Kills*: 95

Total Damage Dealt*: 356,526

Average GPM*: 512.64
**in regionals*





Name: SK Gaming
In-Game Tag: [SK]
Region: European
Roster: ManiaKK (Solo), Zyrhoes (Jungle),
From Left to Right Realzx (Hunter), CaptainTwigg
(Mid), Badgah (Support)

Combined SMITE Career: 10 Years, 11 Months

Total Player Kills*: 416

Total Damage Dealt*: 1,774,487

Average GPM*: 433.01
**in regionals*





Name: Cognitive Prime
In-Game Tag: [COG]

Region: North American

Roster: Omegatron (Solo),
From Left to Right BaRRaCCuDDa (Hunter),
Andinster (Jungle), MLCst3alth
(Mid), Jeffhindla (Support)

Combined SMITE Career: 11 Years, 10 Months

Total Player Kills*: 381

Total Damage Dealt*: 1,523,454

Average GPM*: 482.53
**in regionals*





Name: Cognitive Red

In-Game Tag: [COGR]

Region: North American

Roster: Divios (Solo), DaGarz (Jungle),
From Left to Right Snoopy (Hunter), TheBoosh
(Mid), Eonic (Support)

Combined SMITE Career: 11 Years, 3 Months

Total Player Kills*: 435

Total Damage Dealt*: 1,407,830

Average GPM*: 505.74

**in regionals*



Please note: this roster may change for the event.



Name: Name Not Found

In-Game Tag: [404]

Region: Latin America

Roster: VKTRON (Solo), Martin (Jungle),
From Left to Right Oxiledeon (Hunter), NicerChile
(Mid), Zethsu (Support)

Combined SMITE Career: 8 Years, 0 Months

Total Player Kills*: N/A

Total Damage Dealt*: N/A

Average GPM*: N/A
**in regionals*



Please note: this roster may change for the event.



Name: We Love Bacon

In-Game Tag: [WL8]

Region: Brazil

Roster: OReiTroll (Solo), qe3q (Hunter),
From Left to Right Nann (Jungle), aimless (Mid), PIBE (Support)

Combined SMITE Career: 11 Years, 9 Months

Total Player Kills*: N/A

Total Damage Dealt*: N/A

Average GPM*: N/A
**in regionals*



Please note: this roster may change for the event.



Name: OMG

In-Game Tag: [OMGA]

Region: China

Roster: FenMi (Solo), Maker (Hunter),
From Left to Right NiFeng (Jungle), Myth (Mid),
ShiMmer (Support)

Combined SMITE Career: 4 Years, 1 Months

Total Player Kills*: N/A

Total Damage Dealt*: N/A

Average GPM*: N/A
**in regionals*



Please note: this roster may change for the event.



2144. DID

Name: Daoge is Dog

In-Game Tag: [DID]

Region: China

Roster: Mikasa (Solo), Master.lu
From Left to Right (Hunter), Night (Mid), abing
(Jungle), IF (Support)

Combined SMITE Career: 4 Years, 0 Months

Total Player Kills*: N/A

Total Damage Dealt*: N/A

Average GPM*: N/A
**in regionals*





THE HISTORY OF ESPORTS IN SMITE

W

alking into the Center Stage Theatre for the SMITE Launch Tournament was breathtaking. There

was an abundance of art, cosplay, and fans all waiting for me to soak in all of the greatness. I was awestruck as I walked into the main stage to find some of my fellow SMITE friends and couldn't help myself as I see Lassiz (Team Dignitas) standing there taking pictures and signing autographs. This was a major event for Hi-Rez Studios and SMITE's first ever tournament where players from different continents would play against each other for a prize pool of \$200,000. But this was as much a celebration as it was a tournament.

SMITE had finally officially launched after being in beta since May 2013.

WEEKLY TOURNAMENTS

This was not the first time SMITE had been a part of eSports though. Members of the community, sponsors, and Hi-Rez themselves had all been hosting weekly tournaments for SMITE for over a year at that point. Most of the prizes for these tournaments were the in-game currency "gems". The community's love for the game kept these weekly tournaments growing until July 2013, when multiple official tournaments launched. Since then we have had hundreds of tournaments in 5 vs 5 conquest, 3 vs 3 joust, and even 1 vs 1 joust. Many alliances were made

out of these weekly tournaments and many teams that we know today earned their pro statuses playing and practicing each week with these tournaments.

FIRST LANS

Gamescom 2013 was home to the first ever SMITE LAN tournament held in Cologne, Germany. The prize pool was €15,000 and four EU teams were invited to the fun. Team CognitiveEU, SK Gaming, Bipolar Method, and Vengeance eSports were picked from the weekly online tournaments. Team CognitiveEU would be come out on top in this tournament making them the first ever victors of a SMITE LAN. Three of the members of CognitiveEU just so



PATH TO 100K

Closing in on the March 2014 release of SMITE, Hi-Rez held their first online major cash prize tournament. This was an online tournament called “The Path to the 100k”. Two separate tournaments were placed, one for the US and one for EU. Eight weeks of all out war. Each week as many teams that signed up, would square off in 5 vs. 5 conquest, single elimination matches, with the semi, and grand finals being best of three matches. Each week the top four teams would win points depending on their place. At the end of the eight weeks, the four teams with the most points got to move on to the SMITE Launch Tournament. There were an abundance of teams that competed in this online tournament for both US and EU, but only eight came out on top. Cognitive Gaming, fan favorite Team Dignitas, Snipe, and Denial eSports all represented the United States teams, while Team Coast, Cloud 9 HyperX, SK Gaming, and Team SoloMid represented Europe. These teams would all go to Atlanta to face off for the biggest prize pool to date in the SMITE Launch Tournament LAN.

happened to be a part of Team SoloMid at the time of the Launch Tournament. It goes to show that those players really know how to play SMITE as a team.

On the week after Gamescom, PAX Prime was taking place in Seattle, WA. Again four teams were invited to attend from the weekly online tournaments but this time they were all US teams. Team Dignitas, Denial, Cognitive Gaming, and Reason Gaming were the challengers in the first US LAN for SMITE. This prize pool was comparable to the EU pool, coming up at \$20,000. Team Dignitas would take home the gold at this tournament.

COMMUNITY TOURNAMENTS

The community has done their fair share to keep the competition rolling as well. Websites like Tiermonster, SMITE Central, SmiteCommunity, EGL.tv, and ESL.tv all have been hosting tournaments weekly for players of any skill level to test their skills. These tournaments usually just have gem prizes available for the winners. The tournaments vary from all different game types such as 5 vs. 5 conquest, 3 vs. 3 joust, 1 vs. 1 joust, and even 4 vs. 4 siege matches. These are a great place to start for players looking to become pro players in SMITE and a great place to meet other players and possible team mates.

“EIGHT PRO TEAMS GATHERED IN ATLANTA TO CELEBRATE THE LAUNCH OF SMITE AND BATTLE OVER A \$200,000 PRIZE POOL.”



SMITE LAUNCH TOURNAMENT

This was it, SMITE was officially launching. Eight pro teams gathered in Atlanta to celebrate the launch of SMITE and battle over a \$200,000 prize pool, and the privilege to go to China for a SMITE showmatch against a Chinese team in 2014. To raise money for the tournament, (which originally started at \$60,000) Hi-Rez sold a promotional skin. Poolseidon, a take on Poseidon which had the God of the Oceans walking around with pool themed attire, was sold and \$5 from every purchase went towards the prize pool.

People poured into the Center Stage Theatre to watch their favorite teams try to win. For three days the battles were waged and one by one, teams were eliminated from the battlefield, left to gaze upon their victors heading towards the top. On the third day, only two teams were left standing. Team Dignitas and Team SoloMid. Both wanting to claim the title of SMITE launch champions for themselves. But only one team could win. Team SoloMid rose victorious over Team Dignitas. Not only did they win the tournament,

they went entirely undefeated. Not losing a single round during the entire tournament, Team SoloMid went back to Europe with trophy in hand, a giant cheque, and a smile on their faces.



THE ROAD TO THE SWC

The first official tournament after the SMITE launch tournament was the SMITE Pro League. This was a seven week online tournament with NA and EU both having separate tournaments. The winner's of this tournament would be admitted into the NA and EU regional championships respectively.

During the SMITE Pro League, a different seven week tournament was taking place. Sign ups were allowed for anyone (minus teams already in the Pro League) and there was no limit to the amount of teams that could sign up. This was the SMITE challenger cup. Each week there was a prize pool of \$1,000. The top two winners of this tournament would go on to face the bottom two teams from the Pro League in the SMITE Wildcard Tournament.

The top two teams from the Challenger Cup headed into a round robin style tournament with the bottom

two teams from the SMITE Pro League. This was played over two weekends and the top two teams from each region earned themselves the 5th and 6th seeds in the Regional Championships.

“IT HAS FINALLY ARRIVED. THE FIRST EVER SMITE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP!”

SMITE REGIONALS

The only thing between the SMITE teams and the world championship is this: The top four teams from Europe and the United States and two teams from the Wildcard Tournament. There was a \$50,000 prize pool for this tournament and entrance to the SMITE World Championship went to the victors. The tournaments would be a best of three elimination style. Both tournaments would have six teams battle for their place in the world championship and only the top two would make it.

For the EU tournament that was held in Cologne Germany, the six teams

that attended were Cloud 9 HyperX, Aquila, Fnatic, Mortality eSports, SK Gaming, and Team SoloMid. Aquila and SK Gaming take the money and move onto the SMITE world championship.

At the NA tournament, held in Atlanta Georgia, the six teams that squared off were Team Dignitas, Fat Chunks, Complexity, The Rambozos, Cognitive Red, and Cognitive Prime. Oddly enough the two Cognitive teams would take first and second place and be ready come right back to Atlanta a few months later.

THE SMITE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

It has finally arrived. The first ever SMITE World Championship! This is the biggest event to ever happen to SMITE. The community has funded this from \$600,000 to over 1.5 million dollars with the Odyssey god skins and ward skins. Again eight teams will come to Atlanta to clash in the battleground of the gods. There is more variety this time around though. Two NA teams, two EU teams, two Chinese teams, and two teams from South America. Representing North America are two sister teams and winners of the NA Regional Championships, Cognitive Prime and

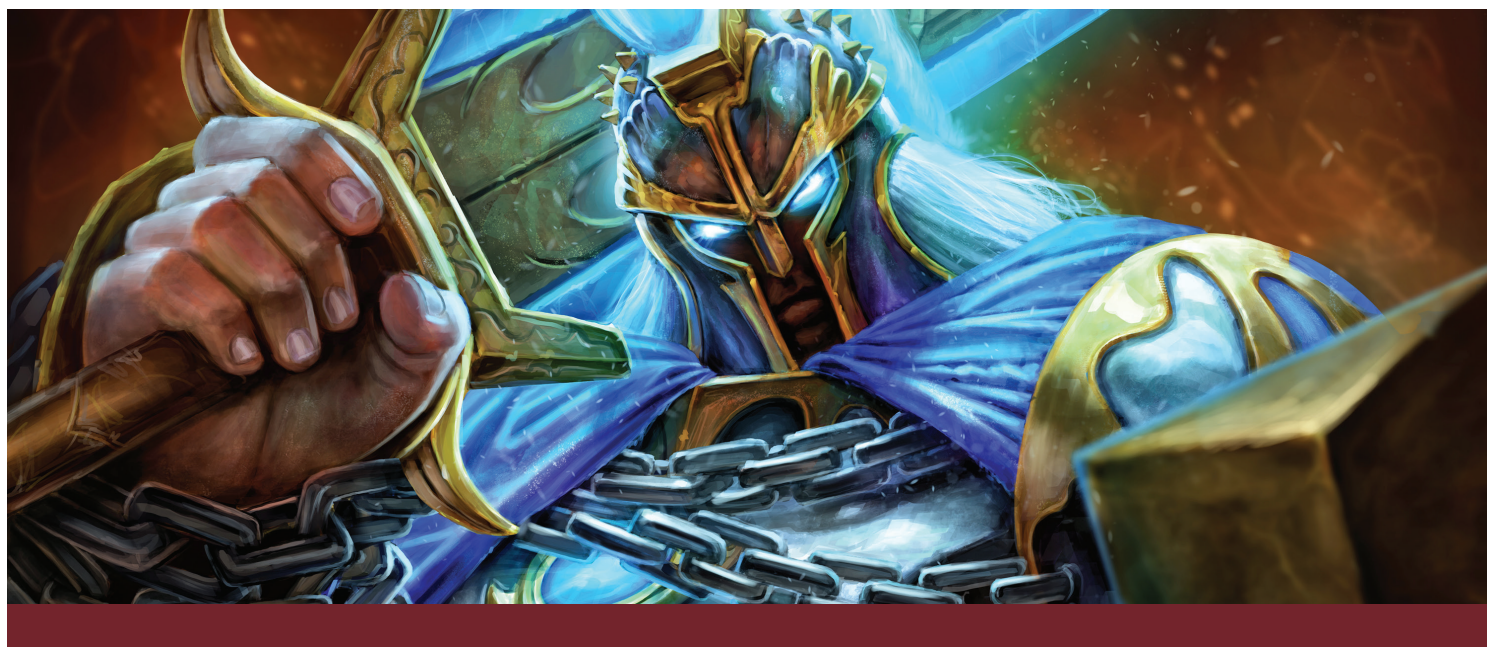
Cognitive Prime. The winners of the EU Regional Championships, Aquila and SK Gaming, will be representing Europe. The newly added China will be bringing OMGA and DID to the US. Finally the two South American teams, 404 and We Love Bacon.

Friday and Saturday - 2 groups of 4 teams will participate in a round robin tournament. The top 2 from those groups advance to a single elimination Semi-Final that will begin on Saturday afternoon. There will then be a best-of-five final match on Sunday after the third place match Sunday morning.

The prize-pool will be distributed amongst the SWC participants as follows: First place winners will receive 50% of the prize pool, second place will receive 20%, third place will receive 15%, fourth place will receive 10%, and fifth through eighth place will receive 1.25% of the total prize. This means that first place will receive near \$1,000,000 That's enough to make even Swagni jealous.

That's a lot of eSports! But I am sure it's nothing compared from what is to come in 2015. If 2014 was any indication, next year will be even more explosive on the battleground of the gods! ■

Written by Tanner Schelle



A man with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a brown suit jacket over a light-colored shirt, is speaking into a black microphone. He is standing on a stage with a blue, textured background. The lighting is warm, highlighting his face and the microphone.

INTERVIEW WITH HIREZ STEW



HiRezStew - The Myth, The Man, The President.

S

tewart Chisam (also known as HiRezStew & schisam) joined Hi-Rez Studios back in May 2008 and since has helped to develop both Tribes: Ascend and SMITE. Earlier this year he became the President of the studio and now oversees the development and management of said studio.

We got the opportunity to pick Stew's brain on his thoughts around the SMITE World Championships and how eSports has affected its development.

GameOn: *Is SMITE the first game that you've been involved with that has a competitive eSports scene?*

Stew: While it never took off in the same way that SMITE has, Tribes: Ascend had a very passionate competitive eSports scene. It was really because of Tribes that we attracted both HirezAPC and HirezBart to the company -- so we learned some very valuable lessons and found some very good people because of Tribes.

When it was in its early development stages, did you envision that SMITE would become as large as it was? If

not, when did you realise you were on to something big?

We went live with the early Closed Beta for SMITE at the very end of May in 2012. There were only like 18 gods, the UI was very unfinished, and a lot of the art was way below our current standard.

“I REMEMBER MAKING THE SUBJECT LINE OF MY SUMMARY EMAIL ON BETA PERFORMANCE: ADONIS BLOOD AND TIGER DNA.”

But, right away, the core metrics that we look at in terms of user engagement and retention were just off the hook.

After the first month of Closed Beta, I remember making the subject line of my summary email on Beta performance: “Adonis Blood and Tiger DNA.” For all its early flaws, the game had serious mo-jo from day one.



Did you know? Stew's first taste of eSports was in 1981, when he was the champion of his neighbourhood league for Intellivision Basketball.

Has the eSports scene within SMITE changed the direction of development at all?

It takes a lot of development effort to properly support a game as an eSport. There are a lot of things, like spectator support for example, that are not only big design challenges, but big technical challenges as well. And, of course, design-wise you really need to make sure you are considering not only the average player, but that Top 0.1% that is just mind-blowingly awesome at your game.

It's been a really fun and invigorating experience to not only be part of building a game, but to be part of building a SPORT. For a sports nerd like myself, it's heaven.

What about this scene are you most proud of and why?

That's an easy one: The community. Hands down. I mean, the SMITE community is just freaking amazing. It's really the community that has driven the growth of SMITE, and the community that has driven SMITE eSports. Just

look at what the Community has done bringing this prize pool to almost \$2 million. It's mind blowing and way above our expectations.

With SMITE for the Xbox One coming out, how do you foresee eSports moving across onto this platform?

I'm really excited to see how SMITE does as an eSport on the Xbox One. There really aren't that many other games out there like ours on the consoles -- so we will be forging some new ground, and I am sure we will learn a lot of lessons along the way.

I'm really thrilled to have Scott Lussier (aka Scott Ghandi) on our staff. His experience inside of the Halo eSports community is definitely helping us understand the console eSports scene better, and some of the things we need to consider as we bring the game to Xbox One.

At the end of the day, I think the developer can do a lot to support and encourage a game as an eSport, but it is up to the game's community to really adopt the game as a sport. So we are putting our initial focus on doing the things we need to do in order to build the eSports community.

“ IT'S REALLY THE COMMUNITY THAT HAS DRIVEN THE GROWTH OF SMITE, AND THE COMMUNITY THAT HAS DRIVEN SMITE ESPORTS. ”

Have you ever shoutcasted a match before? If so, how did it go? If not, what's holding you back?

Haha. No. I would suck bad at shoutcasting. I know guys like Bart, Diem, Hinduman, Rory and ScottGhandi can make shoutcasting look effortless, but it's a very difficult skill to learn, and I really just don't have the natural talent for it.

Some people are best left just to be suits behind a desk -- that's me!

As a fairly mediocre player, I sometimes feel overwhelmed when I hear players talking about SMITE on a professional level. Does it make you feel strange knowing that there are players that know every small detail about a game you helped create?

It's amazing. I watch these guys play and talk to them about the game and it just explodes my brain. They are so many levels above what I could ever aspire to as a player.

It is definitely very humbling to see the passion that our players and fans have around the game and it provides a lot of motivation as I come to work every day.

Being the President of a company must be pretty time consuming - what do you do in your leisure time?

I play SMITE, of course! And spend as much time as I can with my kids. They grow up fast.

Do you get enthusiastic when watching eSports? Are you a sit-back and cheer on the inside type, or jump from your seat and scream at the screen type?

My family thinks I am nuts, because I will sit on the couch on the weekend and watch the games and I am always shouting at the screen.

Who is your favourite god to play, which position do you play them in, and why to both?

I like playing Support characters a lot, although I'll still play a decent amount of Agni -- just because he was one of my first obsessions in the game and what's not fun about dropping meteors on people?

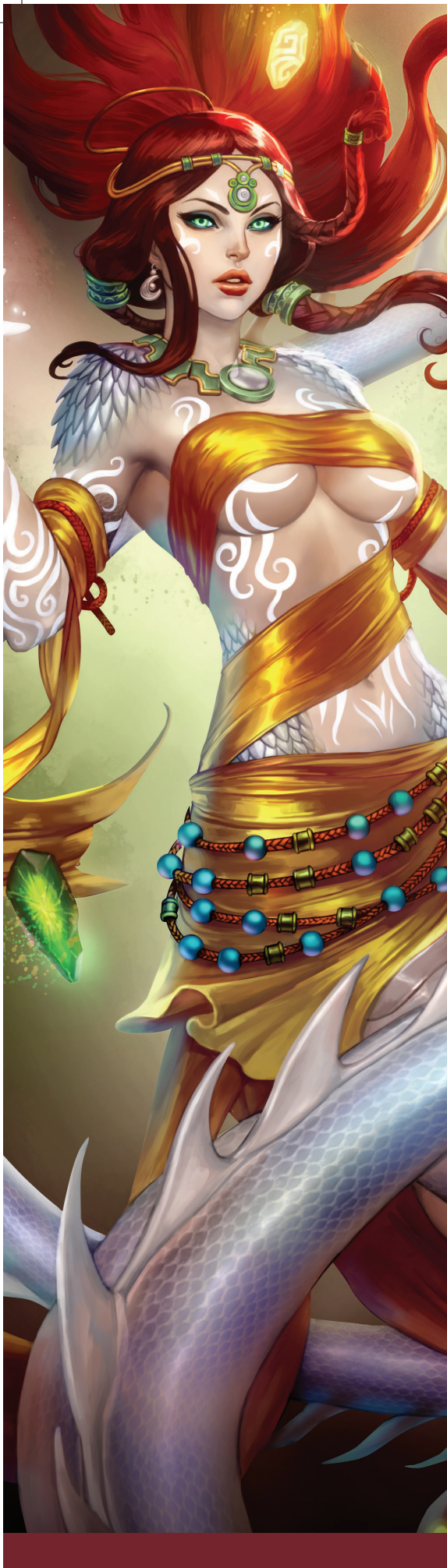
If I want to just chill out and relax after a long day at work, you'll find me playing freeze-bot, full-tank Ymir in Arena. My goal is always to get at least 30 assists, and I hit my goal a lot of the time.

How do you plan on relaxing once this event is all done and dusted?

I think the NCAA College Football Championship Game is on the day after our World Championship is over (Roll Tide!). So I'll watch that and then get back to the grind. We have a lot of exciting stuff to get done for our Season 2 release! ■

Written by Kris West





◀ *Did you know?
In the regionals,
Nu Wa was
banned from
45% of games.*

THE IMPORTANCE OF PICKS & BANS

If you can believe it, there are now over sixty different gods implemented into SMITE. While they are all great in their own way, none of them can win without being strategically placed with four other gods on a team. This team can not just be a hodgepodge of randomly chosen gods and expect to win. Some people would even argue that games are won, and lost, in the picks and bans portion of any competitive game. Picks and bans can shape the entire match by negating the other team a hyper-carry Assassin, a Guardian who has the best save potential, or a god that they know the enemy team loves to use (also called a “respect ban”). There are many reasons to allow or disallow the other team to pick a god and here is what you need to know.

WHEN SHOULD A GOD BE BANNED?

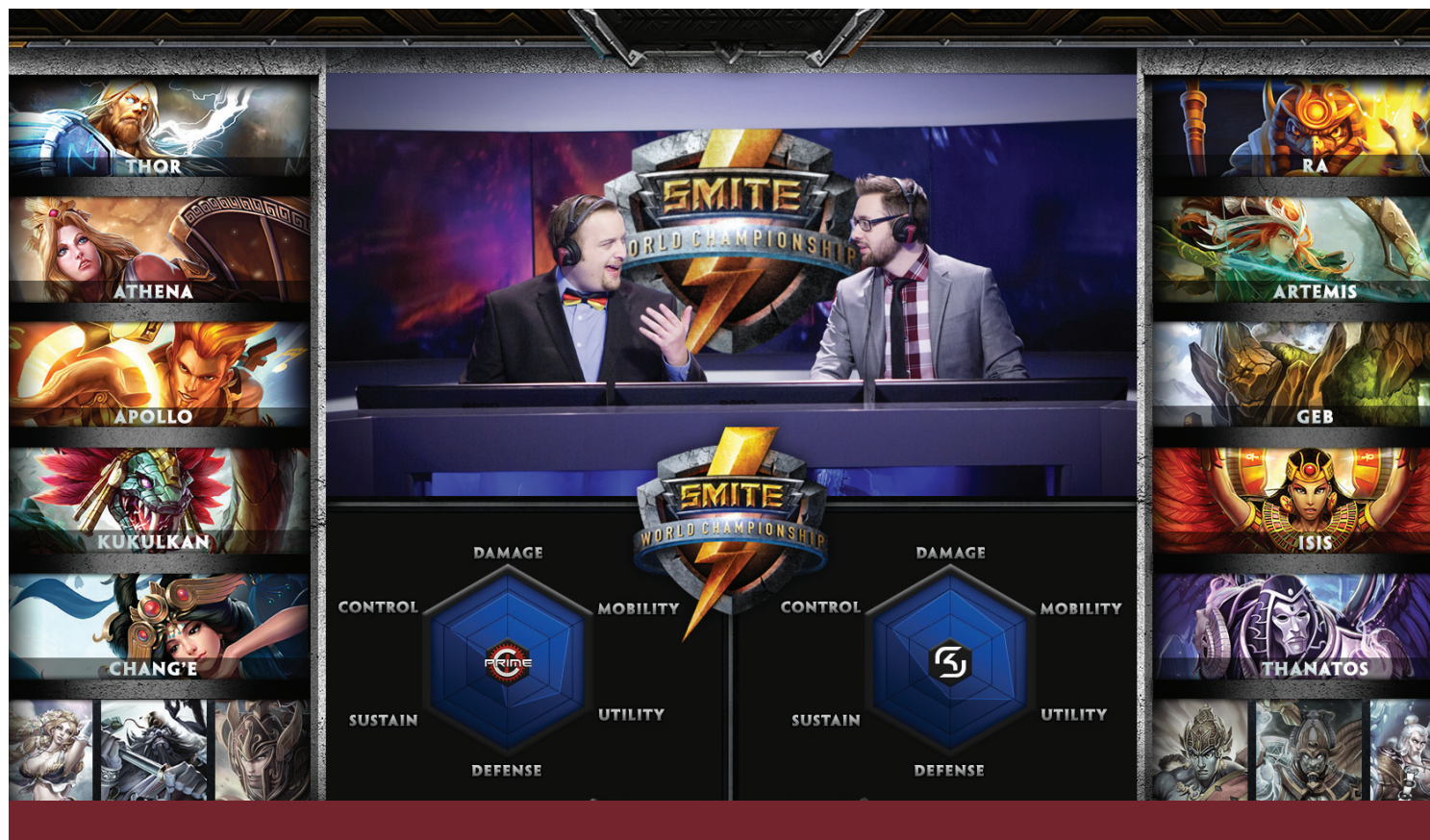
First you have to know how the banning system works. If online, one of the teams is randomly selected to have

“KNOW YOUR TEAM’S WEAKNESSES AND STRENGTHS ALIKE AND YOU WILL KNOW WHO TO BAN.”

first ban. If at a LAN, like at the at SWC, whoever gets first ban also gets first pick. But this means whoever gets second



*Did you know?
In the regionals,
Apollo was
banned from
33% of games.*



ban gets to pick two on their first pick. The teams alternate banning one god at a time until there are four gods in total banned from play. Then both teams pick three gods to use, returning us to one more round of banning. This final round of banning lets both teams choose one more god to ban, followed by the last god picks.

When deciding what gods to ban you have to keep a few things in mind. First think of who you want to play as. For example, let's say I am going to play the Hunter role and decide that I would like to play Artemis. While being really strong, having lots of poke, and possible critical hit chances, Artemis lacks any kind of escape. She is very vulnerable to ganks and needs to be careful with positioning. I could request that my team bans a high CC support, a Hunter with loads of CC like Anhur, or a Jungler that can kill me almost instantly such as Loki. Communicating your role and who you want to play in the role is essential. Know your team's weaknesses and strengths alike and you will know who to ban.

I mentioned a "respect ban" earlier in the article and some of you may not know what that is. This is a term usually used in pro games and refers to banning a god solely based on an enemy team mate's past performance or preference

“YOU CAN'T BAN EVERYONE THAT IS GOING TO BE A PROBLEM FOR YOU.”

of a certain god. This usually happens after the first match with a team since they may not know or want to ban, off of an enemy's games against a different team. Say I went 10-1-5 with Anhur in one game against your team and you felt that with Anhur in my hands I was able to be such a problem to your team that you have to make sure that I don't get him for next game so you ban him before I can pick him. That is a respect ban.

HOW DOES THIS INFLUENCE THE GAME?

Even though you have three different picks per team you still can't ban everyone that is going to be a problem for you. If for some reason you let someone through that is going to be a problem for your team you need to figure out a counter pick for that god. Say, for example, the enemy team picks Kali as their Jungler. Kali can be a massive carry for a team if used correctly. Especially since she can not die in her ultimate. Her biggest counters are god's with burst and crowd control. Gods like Hun Batz work great against her because they can melt her before she is able to use her ultimate or attack you with basic attacks and heal. If for some reason you can't ban everyone you want to, know who to counter pick. Once again knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the enemy is the best thing you can do before you get in game. ■

Written by Tanner Schelle

GameOn

DID YOU KNOW THAT WE CREATE A **FREE**,
DIGITAL, COMMUNITY LED MAGAZINE FOR SMITE?



gameonmag.com/smite

LIGHTS! ACTION! NOISE!

A

bead of sweat rolls down his face from the combined pressure of the match at hand and the

heat of the bright lights adorning the stage. He can feel, deep within him, the rising tension as he prepares to strike. The collective breaths of hundreds of spectators are caught in their throats as he pounces, perfectly executing the combo he had planned and turning the tables on a lost teamfight. The crowd goes wild; a cacophony of cheers, whistles, applause and the voices of the casters rising to a peak pierces even his sound-muffling headset as his heart beats feverishly with excitement.

“WELCOME TO THE ARENA WHERE CHAMPIONS ARE CROWNED. WELCOME TO THE LOCAL AREA NETWORK TOURNAMENT.”

Welcome to the arena where champions are crowned. Welcome to the Local Area Network tournament.

Players are, without a doubt, most familiar with online tournaments: playing from the comfort of their own home or team house for the grand prize. Online tournaments are advantageous in that way; the competitors are comfortable





in their surroundings and with their own equipment. Competing in an online tournament is also cheaper in money, time, and energy invested. Players need not fear the jet lag or accommodation nightmares - their biggest worry would be a cat jumping on their keyboard. Online tournaments are easily accessible and come around frequently, giving the

“The LAN environment is so much more intense because you actually hear the crowd which is normally the main point. To be able to play sitting next to you team mates and play a tournament is also really great. The whole effect of playing at a LAN event is not something every team can cope with but its something we thrive from.”

- Realzx, SK Gaming

teams ample opportunities to hone their skills and face off against one another.

There are a lot of unique advantages and experiences that online tournaments simply cannot deliver, however - experiences that push Local Area Network (LAN) tournaments above and beyond.

LAN tournaments offer something refreshing: a uniquely tangible

experience for teams and spectators alike. It pulls the game away from the screen and into the real world, turning the digital into the physical. What is it about LANs, though, that makes the experience so vivid and visceral? How does it achieve this unique experience for players and spectators?

First, and perhaps foremost, is the fact that the game is played on stage. The players are there in all their glory, just a short distance from the crowd of hundreds, if not thousands, cheering them on. In place of the familiar walls surrounding their monitors there is a sea of hundreds of indistinct faces and

bright stage lights on every corner. The heat of the lamps and the roar of the crowd reinforce the notion that they are there to fight and to entertain like modern gladiators in a high-tech arena.

There is a unique atmosphere at LAN events, something the players can feel when they're not competing or prepping for games. The hustle and bustle of people moving around, the hype and excitement for the matches and the voices of the shoutcasters ringing through the hall all

"I would say my favorite part of LANs is hanging out with my teammates and meeting the fans. I love talking to fans of COG and supporters of my stream. Whenever I make a play and our fans go crazy yelling, I get such a rush and a drive to win. The fans are everything to me."

- BaRRaCCuDDa, COG Prime

create a singular sensation of significance. Fans, players and personalities mingle and interact constantly, all united in their love for the game.

At LAN tournaments, the players get to hang out and compete side-by-side with their teammates. They can be together as people and friends instead of just players in a team, bonding in ways not possible in an online environment. It is this unification that may be the

most significant aspect of LANs. Nothing quite compares to sharing the frustration, desperation, momentum and celebration with your friends so close.

Many things set a LAN apart from an online tournament, like the almost non-existent ping and the fact that teams always bring their A-games to such high profile events. But it's the people, the interaction with the fans and the fierce competition that make them a unique, almost magical experience. The environment truly changes the game, turning an already spectacular event into a legendary one, creating memories that will last forever. ■

Written by Allison Jean







INTERVIEW WITH HIREZAPC

The Smite World Championship is one of the biggest, if not the biggest, events in SMITE history. But a tournament this size doesn't organize itself. And that's where Adam 'HiRezAPC' Mierzejewski steps in! But who is the man that organizes these major events for HiRez? We got a chance to catch up with him, getting to know the brains and brawn behind the premiere SMITE tournaments.

GameOn: What drew you to eSports (in general) in the first place?

Adam: Growing up, gaming was always part of my life. I grew up on both consoles and a PC to start. My brother got me into Nintendo while my father introduced me to the computer. I used to play DOS games and Windows games such as Wolfenstein 3D, Day of the Tentacle, Commander Keen... all those classics. But it was Tribes

Tribes spiritual successor called "Fallen Empire: Legions". From there I got into Team Fortress 2 where I played in CAL (Cyber Athletic League) for the first season. This was my first true competitive atmosphere as I was in a league with all the best players in the game. My team was sponsored and made it as a top 8 team in the game.

During this time, I was watching HLTV on the best teams in Counter Strike which is where I'd watch teams that we see in SMITE today like SK Gaming and Fnatic. eSports was not nearly as established as it is today, so I didn't know what I was following was "eSports". With the combination of my competitive background and my interest in gaming, I was destined to be part of the eSports scene.

The release of Tribes: Ascend was when I really got my feet wet in the scene. I led the best team in the game and traveled on behalf of HiRez to a few

“GROWING UP, GAMING WAS ALWAYS PART OF MY LIFE.”

that really set my mind on gaming.

I started off as a casual since I have very limited time on the computer. My parents only gave me a maximum of 2 hours per day. As I got older, I was able to break out of those restrictions - I would play Tribes 2 nonstop every single day. With all the time I put into the game, I ended up being rather good - which is when my competitive career began.

I played on small ladders for Tribes 2 and led one of the best teams in a

tournaments to compete in. Our team won each LAN and took home the biggest prize pool in Tribes history at NASL Season 3 - \$10,000. This not only got me more into believing in eSports, but it also helped me on landing a job at HiRez Studios.

How does all of this influence how you manage seasons and tournaments?

Due to my experience as a competitive gamer, it helps bring a lot to the table. Not only do I know how tournaments



and leagues work from watching sports on TV such as football, baseball and basketball, but being a part of a league as a player really makes you

“BEING ON THAT SIDE OF THE COIN HELPED ME LEARN WHAT IT WAS TO BE A PLAYER IN THE SCENE.”

hone in to the actual rules of the game to make sure you don't break them.

When I was a player for a Tribes: Ascend team, I worked with Bart on getting all the information I needed to attend events and to compete in them. Being on that side of the coin helped me

learn what it was to be a player in the scene. I took a lot of that knowledge and carried it over to the position I now hold today. I see these players in SMITE and can relate on what they're going through - since SMITE is the first eSport for most of them. All of this combined helped me manage the past year of SMITE eSports.

What is your favorite part about being the eSports tournament manager?

I love being in the studio with the people I work with. As a lot of the community already knows, we have a lot of funny and unique personalities that work in this company. What you see on camera is no different than what you'd see in the studio.

But I'd also have to say being close to the players is another favorite part about the position. No one knew who I was when I officially became the eSports

tournament manager at the beginning of 2014, but as we come to the end of the year, I've made a lot of close relationships with these guys. I talk to the players on a near daily basis - whether its an official response about a tournament or just to bounce some ideas off of. I feel the players can rely on me on whatever they send my way and I want to continue to be that guy. I enjoy it every single day.

How has eSports in SMITE evolved since Beta?

It's amazing how far along SMITE has come along in eSports. For the first year and a half, we ran weekend tournaments that were worth \$1,000 per region. We had many different iterations of eSports sites to accommodate these tournaments as well as different ways to check-in and get games broadcasted.

Last year around this time, we were

still running these weekly tournaments with very minimal production. In fact, Bart and Lionheart used to cast games from their bedrooms. Fast forward to now, we have a full studio with plenty of lighting and a full production behind the scenes. Along with that, we've had more LANs this year than we ever had in the past, with even bigger prize pools. The biggest prize pool last year I believe was \$20,000. This year, we had a launch tournament that was worth over \$200,000, four \$50,000 prize pools and an invitational that had a prize pool of \$35,000.

So I think it's safe to say we've come a long way and I don't see our momentum ending anytime soon.

How does the SWC differ from the Launch Tournament back in March 2014?

The SMITE Launch Tournament was awesome. We had a great venue filled up with hardcore SMITE fans and eight teams from North America and Europe. But the SMITE World Championship will be bigger and better from every front.

This event will have the best teams from five different regions across the world which are China, Brazil, Latin America, North America and Europe. The venue itself holds over three times the amount of people than the SMITE Launch Tournament did and there's



\$1,750,000 and we anticipate that to reach at least 2 million dollars. With that kind of money on the line, this is something that'll catch interest in anyone's eyes.

teams needed to dedicate their time to in order to qualify for this big event. We went through qualifiers, a league and a LAN in order to pick the best teams in North America and Europe. Now it's time to find out who is actually THE BEST in the World. The best team will walk away with the bragging rights and 50% of the total prize pool.

“I THINK IT'S SAFE TO SAY WE'VE COME A LONG WAY AND I DON'T SEE OUR MOMENTUM ENDING ANYTIME SOON.”

no question whether this venue better. The Cobb Energy Center is amazing from the inside and out. I think this location alone will blow people's minds.

Along with all of that, the prize pool is something most games have never seen. Currently we sit at a prize pool of

These games will be incredibly intense - especially when it comes to the finals.

Lastly, the path teams needed to get to this event was way more intense than what teams needed to do in order to get invited to the SMITE Launch Tournament. There were a series of tournaments that

As a follow-up, what are the hurdles in organizing such a high-profile tournament?

The logistics and hurdles to make this event possible are never ending it seems. One big one that we needed to tackle many months in advance was making sure players overseas were able to obtain their passport and visas in time

for the event. Working with other regions eSports coordinators has been a daily process for me to make sure everyone's on the same page for the event.

With the SMITE World Championship being as big as it is, it's taking resources throughout the entire company in order to make this the best possible event. There are meetings every day to make sure everyone from each department are synced up with each other and cover the needed items for the event. The entire month of December was especially busy for everyone as we try to stay in line with our products release schedule, as well as getting the assets from every angle of the tournament.

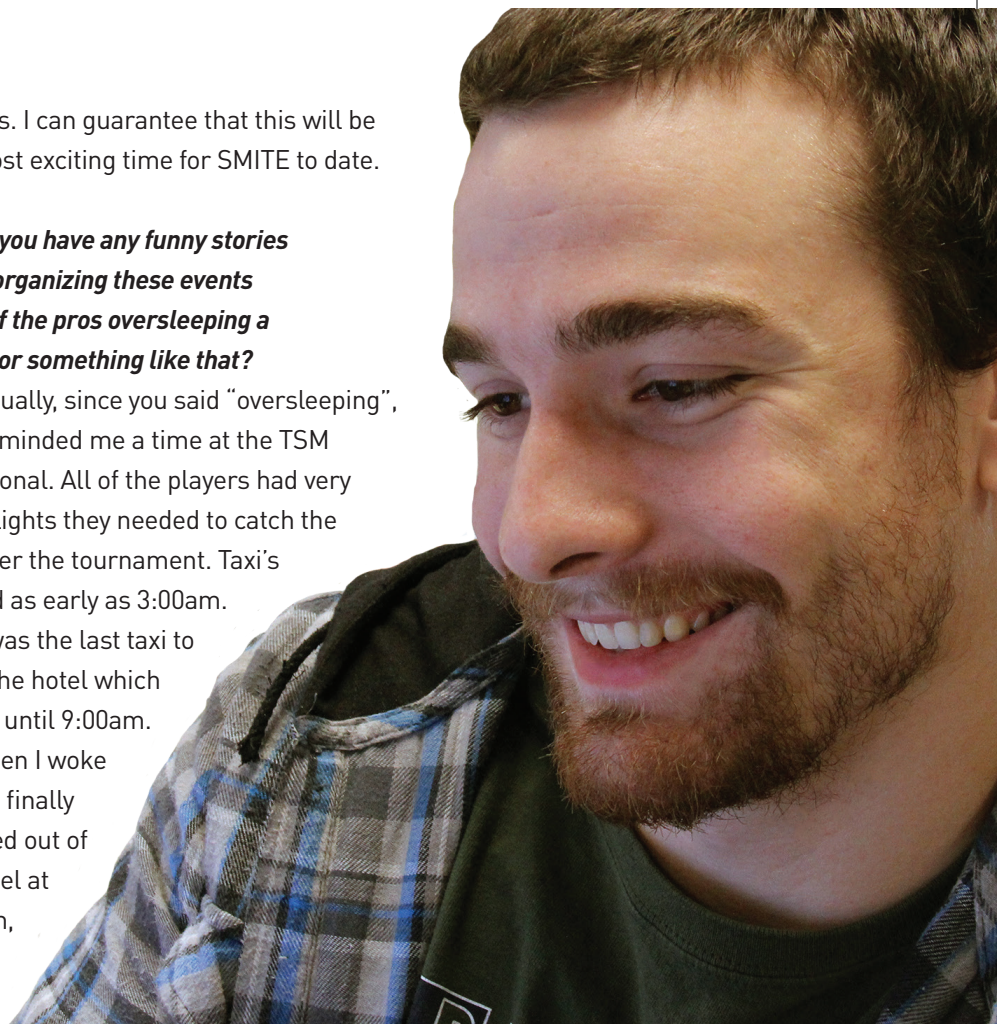
You never know how much work goes into creating events to this degree until you're under the development side of it. Needless to say, we're all extremely excited to see all of this hard work put under lights and see the reactions of our

viewers. I can guarantee that this will be the most exciting time for SMITE to date.

Do you have any funny stories about organizing these events - one of the pros oversleeping a match or something like that?

Actually, since you said "oversleeping", that reminded me a time at the TSM Invitational. All of the players had very early flights they needed to catch the day after the tournament. Taxi's started as early as 3:00am. Mine was the last taxi to leave the hotel which wasn't until 9:00am.

When I woke up and finally checked out of my hotel at 8:50am,



I see Halfdevil sitting on a bench watching some TV show on his phone. Halfdevil was suppose to catch a taxi at 3:00am. So I stopped and poked Halfdevil to ask him why the heck is he not home yet. He looks at me with the most guilty face and goes, "Yeahhhhh.... about that..... Opps."

So he sat there for 5 hours waiting on me, I suppose, so he can ask what he needs to do to get home at this point. I took him in my taxi and got him to the airport. The fun didn't stop there. I had less than 30 minutes to get through security and to my terminal. With that, my phone was practically dead. Meanwhile, Halfdevil was trying to get a new plane to get home, but he wasn't having any luck.

This is when I was trying to get ahold of someone from Atlanta to help him out, but since this is at 10:00am CEST, it was 4:00am on the east coast.

So just before my plane was about to take off, I gave HalfDevil some contact information to someone in Atlanta. He was also running low on battery, but to put this story to an end, he needed to wait a couple more hours to get ahold of someone at which point he was able to get a flight home. Never a dull moment.

There's plenty of silly stories that happen at these LANs, but I'll leave it to the players to share those :P.

What are some of the challenges regarding coordinating the players? e.g. housing, flights, jetlag

I'll be honest, our players are fairly easy to coordinate with for travel. There's always a twist here and there, but for the most part, it's fairly easy going. The flights are normally fairly early in the morning a day after the tournament,

so getting them to the airport on time and making sure they don't miss their flight can be difficult at times. Beyond that, I feel like we have a good system in place to make sure everything is taken care from all angles for our players.

What have you gained from working so closely with the pro players?

Having the opportunity to talk and hang out with all the pro players has been an absolute pleasure throughout the year. We have some awesome personalities in our community. Working with the players closely allowed me to learn what kind of needs and preparation these players go through in order to succeed as a professional player. Most people don't understand what the pros have sacrificed to get to where they are today. There's a lot of hard work put into it on





their end and for me to be there to help them throughout the process, it has been very rewarding. I look forward to many more years of seeing this scene grow.

What is the most surprising thing that has happened in the history of SMITE eSports, generally speaking?

The easy answer is the SMITE World Championship prize pool. Seeing how much the community has put into this prize pool through The Odyssey is just amazing. I remember when we hit the 1 million dollar marker and we were all hyped about it. Now we're less than a quarter million until we hit 2 million. That's an absurd amount of cash haha.

But one of the most surprising moments in my eyes happened at the EU Regional Championship. I was admining the Cloud 9 HyperX vs Aquila series and in this particular case, Game 2. Most of us know how this game went, but Aquila was just a couple of basic attacks away from being eliminated from the Regional Championship. The press

were ready to take pictures and video of Cloud 9 celebrating their victory and the lights in the studio actually came on to prepare for this. But to everyone's surprise, Aquila was not only able to stop the push, but they were able to push forward to get the Fire Giant and then finish the game to take the series.

It was an incredible game to watch and the crowd was going absolutely nuts.

What's your most memorable moment in the history of SMITE eSports?

Launching the SMITE Pro League (SPL) has to be one of my favorite moments in SMITE eSports. Bart and I have always talked about having a league for SMITE and when we finally got the go ahead to develop one, you better bet we were excited. It took a lot of preparation from all angles but that did not stop us by any means. From working with the web team to accommodate the new league addition, to getting the six teams from each region to abide to their seven week schedule, the league

ran very smoothly, in my eyes, and I was very happy on how it turned out.

Along with that, we had the Challenger Cup played simultaneously. The success story that Aquila brought to the table is something that I plan on telling any new team trying to get involved with the SMITE eSports scene. It takes a lot of preparation to rise to the top, but it goes to show anyone with true passion and dedication can make it happen.

Next year is where things get really interesting. I feel like a lot of teams will start to mature throughout the beginning of 2015 and I will not be surprised if we start to see new names that we didn't see throughout 2014.

Where do you think eSports in SMITE is headed for the next season?

You'll hear much more about the 2015 season at the SMITE World Championship, but expect bigger and better things. With the expansion of SMITE in late 2014 and into 2015 as well as seeing SMITE go to the Xbox, SMITE itself is only getting bigger. We'll see more regions getting involved with the eSports scene and I have no doubt in my mind that the next World Championship will have a level of competition we haven't seen before. I'm extremely excited for the future of our scene. And you should be too.

How do you plan on relaxing once this event is over?

Ha. There's no plans of that haha. But I'm actually okay with that. I really do love every moment of my job. Immediately after the event, we will start grinding out the items needed for the 2015 season and get straight into the qualifiers. We can't afford to lose the momentum we get out of the SWC, so we're going straight into 2015 with a bang. Get excited! ■

Written by Allison Jean



COACHES: THE UNSUNG HEROES OF PRO SMITE

E

veryone knows the pro players, the people who compete on a top level and display a degree

of skill most of us can only dream of. Raw talent and individual training can only take you so far, however, and as a result even pro players can hit a point where they no longer feel they improve regardless of how much time and effort they put into it. This is where the coach steps in, helping the team perform above and beyond their natural capabilities and sharpening their already impressive skill in the game of SMITE.

eSports is no different than any of the 'traditional' sports when you look at it on a competitive level: all players are athletes and perform on an exceptionally high skill

“ALL PLAYERS ARE ATHLETES AND PERFORM ON AN EXCEPTIONALLY HIGH SKILL LEVEL, WHETHER THIS IS PHYSICAL OR MENTAL.”

level, whether this is physical or mental. The role of a coach in the team is thus just as similar, and just as diverse, in eSports as it is in any other discipline. But what are the things a coach actually does, and how does the team benefit from them?

MANAGING THE TEAM

One of the main roles of a coach is managing the players. While this sounds easy at first, it's a large and complex task that requires constant attention, especially when you take into account that the coaches and players rarely live in the same location or even general area. This problem, almost unique to eSports, greatly hinders communication and the ability to be in constant touch.

One of the aspects of managing the



team is ensuring that the players, and their diverse personalities, work as a cohesive unit. This means identifying their strengths and weaknesses, in the game and in real life, and work to compensate those with the strengths and weaknesses of the rest of the team. It also means that the coach develops the team's communication, training them to make calls efficiently and immediately, allowing the rest of the team to respond appropriately to the situation. Outside of the game this helps the players to bond and form a connection, further strengthening the cohesion of the team.

Another part of managing the team is ensuring the players do not have to worry about 'mundane' issues like travel expenses, accommodation and similar 'real world' issues that come with participating in tournaments. Sometimes these are done by the team's manager, but even then the coach is usually included while making the arrangements. Communicating the team's wishes and preferences greatly increases the player's comfort, ensuring the players perform their best during the matches themselves.

DEVELOPING THE PLAYERS

This, together with strategizing, is what most people imagine when they think about the job of the coach. Coaches are there to help the players improve in the game, increasing consistency and performance at the top level that is required of them.

As SMITE is a team sport, this

development is not only on an individual level, but also at team level. The proverb 'a chain is only as strong as its weakest link' holds even truer in a game like SMITE, as it is harder to fill in a weakness due to the limitations of a god and their kit. In soccer, for example, it can be expected of a player to at least know how to take the ball and reliably place it where it needs to be, whether that is a player or the goal. Sure, differences in skill exist, and some are better at one thing than another, but each player can fill in a hole. In SMITE, not so much. The roles of

each player are so defined that it's nearly impossible for someone else to jump in and fill that weakness during a match.

A coach is there to help the players practice as individual players and as a team so that they naturally fill each other's weaknesses while improving them to a level where the team can rely on each player. They do this through setting up a training regime, organizing scrims - practice matches between pro teams - and setting clear, defined goals for the players to attain. It's also easier for a coach to identify (possible)

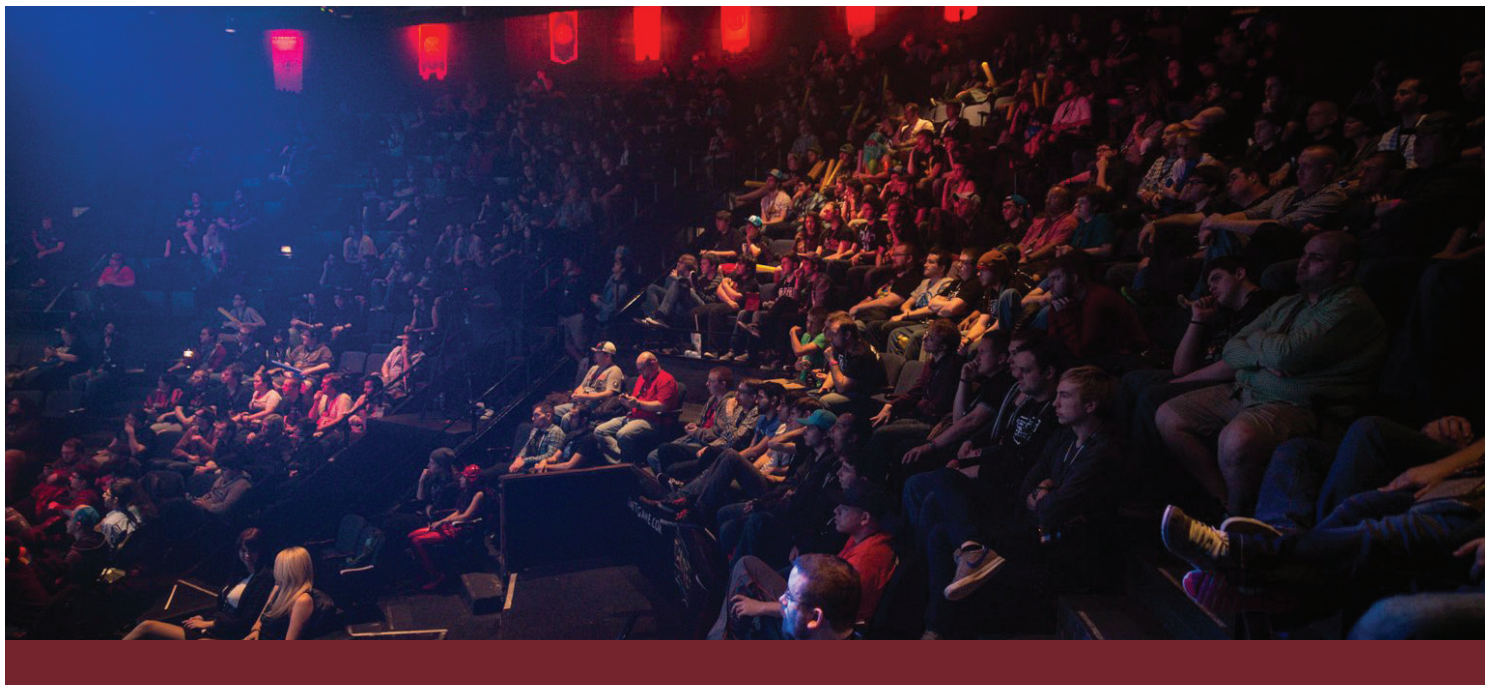




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problems as they have an impartial 'birds eye' view of the team, allowing them to set up directed exercises for the team or individual players to improve or eliminate those problems.

STRATEGIZING

The stereotypical job of a coach, and the thing they're most lauded for, is forming strategies and instilling this

the fact that the meta game, the game surrounding the game as it were, is much more fluent than in traditional sports. American football sees the rise and fall of certain plays throughout seasons, and some players execute these better than others, but these plays slowly change over the course of a season. The meta in SMITE changes with every patch,

hand keeping them as generic as possible while at the same time certain picks need to be included for optimal effect.

Besides the overarching game plan that a coach forms, he also needs to instill the tactical awareness and situational analysis required to deal with the ever-changing battlefield. A common proverb used by strategists is 'no plan survives first contact with the enemy', and this is as true for SMITE as it is anywhere else. Probably even more so, as the picking and banning phase can throw a wrench in even the best laid out plans before the game even starts.

“THIS IS MADE MORE DIFFICULT DUE TO THE FACT THAT THE META GAME (...) IS MUCH MORE FLUENT THAN IN TRADITIONAL SPORTS.”

knowledge into the players. Again, a MOBA environment like SMITE makes this job a lot harder than in any of the 'traditional' sports.

As in any sport, a coach has to analyze the team's and the opposing team's capabilities, forming a plan to increase the chances of success as much as possible. This means analyzing play styles, team composition and weak links, finding options that allow the team to capitalize on the situation.

This is made more difficult due to

biweekly or so, and changes drastically when that patch goes live. A coach needs to be aware of every change, how it affects their strategies and the strengths and weaknesses of their players.

Another thing that influences the strategies on a level unknown in 'traditional' sports is the picking and banning phase of each match. This phase alone can make or break strategies as a whole, as certain gods may or may not be available. A coach needs to account for this while formulating their plans, on one

JUST THE TIP

All these things are just the tip of what a coach does for a team, and how he contributes to their success. A coach is as much a mentor and a friend as they are a game and performance specialist, helping with personal issues, providing emotional support and aiding in balancing a player's personal and professional life.

A coach is an essential part of the team, and they are the unsung heroes of SMITE's pro scene. ■

Written by Jorg van der Velden



HIREZDRYBEAR
HIREZ COMMUNITY
MANAGER



DMBRANDON
STREAMER &
PERSONALITY



HIREZBART
AMBASSADOR OF
ESPORTS FOR HIREZ



HIREZKELLY
HIREZ COMMUNITY
CONTENT MANAGER

VOICES OF THE BATTLEGROUND



ENTAA KIIIIIIIIII!!!
THERE'S A PENTAA
KIIIIIIIIII!!!"

screamed Drybear

as Gamehunter of Team SoloMid on Vamana took down ShadowQ on Geb, the final member of Team Dignitas. These words and that moment will forever be immortalized as one of the greatest moments in SMITE shoutcasting. The moment? The SMITE Launch Tournament. Those words? Forever will it be etched in the minds of anyone who was there at that moment.

That very moment itself showcases the importance of shoutcasting. Now, who or what exactly is a shoutcaster? Basically, shoutcasting is synonymous with the commentary of that particular gaming

event. Similar to how commentators are present in sporting events, commentary in eSports (in this case, SMITE) is brought to the table by shoutcasters. Providing introductions to the new players and also in-depth analysis for the not-so-new, shoutcasters are continuously there to lend their voice to the game, which is no easy task. As viewers, we expect to know and understand what is going on during the entire game. From the purchasing of starter items to the destruction of the Titan (or the F6 button), we want to know it all. This is when we look to our shoutcasters.

With SMITE being a fast-paced game, basic understanding of the fundamentals of the game such as abilities and mechanics becomes very





important. However, after that has been taken care of, advanced analyzing of the game becomes part of the thrill of the Battleground of the Gods. Why did the player get that item? What does this Active provide for the team? Once again, all of this is in the territory of the shoutcasters. Equipped with vast knowledge and experience with the game, you can always rely on the shoutcaster to elaborate on certain “dos”

and drive us out of the zone of boredom. They bring excitement to the crowds and contribute to the hype of it all. As if on a subconscious level, excited crowds can be related to excited commentary. There cannot be one without the other. You cannot really describe the sensation verbally, you feel it. The increasingly loud voices from the commentators as an Apollo in his chariot approaches the Fire Giant buff being taken by the

“PROVIDING INTRODUCTIONS TO THE NEW PLAYERS AND ALSO IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS FOR THE NOT-SO-NEW, SHOUTCASTERS ARE CONTINUOUSLY THERE TO LEND THEIR VOICE TO THE GAME.”

and “don’ts” throughout the game. To fully embrace the game is to be able to fully scrutinize every action of the player backed up with reasoning, as well as apprehension. Shoutcasting breaks down those barriers and with it, those little details will become more apparent and the beauty of the game will truly shine. Expect your own game to improve after listening to a few rounds of shoutcasting.

Have you ever had to watch a football game on mute? Dull would just be one of the ways to describe it. This is where shoutcasting steps in to take the wheel

enemy team. The non-stop commentary of a teamfight in the middle lane of the Conquest map as ability after ability is used up. The yells and cheers from both the shoutcasters and the crowds also create a perfect storm of hype.

These are just a few of the things we have come to expect from our shoutcasters. Hopefully, they will once again bring their A-game in the SMITE World Championships. Prepare to be pumped up as commentary goes live in the SWC! ■

Written by Timothy Tian



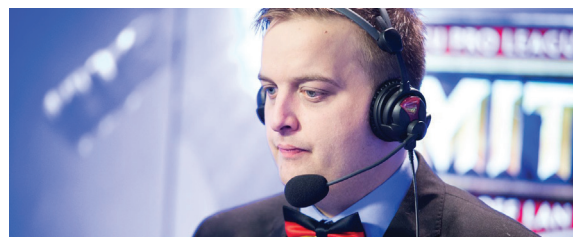
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PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Ever been in the situation where you know there was an amazing moment in a match you were watching, but can't remember when it was? Well, now you don't have to! Use the table below to fill in your favourite moments! We've filled in the first line to give you an idea of how to do it!

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Guan Yu
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Nu Wa
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Cupid
Hades
Isis
Mercury
Odin
Scylla
Tyr
Ymir

Anhur
Ares
Bastet
Fenrir
He Bo
Janus
Ne Zha
Osiris
Sobek
Ullr
Zeus

Anubis
Artemis
Chaac
Freya
Hel
Kali
Neith
Poseidon
Sun Wukong
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